



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Speaker Naize and Delegate Bates continue to advocate for the approval of the Nation's Gaming Compact with the State of New Mexico



Photo: Speaker Johnny Naize, President Ben Shelly, and Council Delegate Lorenzo Bates discuss the proposed Gaming Compact between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico with the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, on Oct. 25.

SANTA FE, N.M. –Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) and chair of the Naabik'íyátí Committee's Gaming Task Force Subcommittee Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), met with the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee on Friday morning, to advocate for the approval of the proposed Gaming Compact between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico.

Currently, the Nation is one of five tribes signed onto a 2001 Gaming Compact which is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2015. The Nation entered into the Compact in 2003.

"The Navajo Nation's current unemployment rate stands at 50-percent," said Speaker Naize. "We are struggling and in need of economic development. This is why the jobs and revenue from our casinos are more important than ever before."

Speaker Naize concluded his statements by assuring the state legislators that the proposed compact is fair and reasonable and will continue to benefit both parties.

In May 2012, the Navajo Nation began initial discussions with Gov. Susana Martinez's Lead Negotiator and after nine months of tough negotiating, an agreement was reached on the terms of the Compact.

On Mar. 8, Gov. Martinez submitted the Navajo Nation Compact to the Committee on Compacts which later recommended the approval of the Compact and submission of a joint resolution to the New Mexico Legislature for a vote.

Although the New Mexico Compact Negotiation Act requires the legislature to act without delay, the Gaming Compact was not placed on the Senate floor for a vote during the 2013 State Legislature's regular session.

In response to questions from the Legislative Finance Committee, Navajo Nation Department of Justice attorney Karis Begaye, explained that failure to approve the proposed Compact at the 2014 State Legislature's regular session would terminate the Compact and require a new one to be negotiated, in accordance with the New Mexico's Compact Negotiation Act.

We would have to issue another letter the Governor requesting for negotiations to open and begin the process again, said Begaye.

"For five years, we have patiently followed the process provided by the Compact Negotiation Act. It is the Nation's position that this Compact does not go back to the Committee on Compacts and should be moved to the House and Senate floor for a 'yes' or 'no' vote," Delegate Bates stated.

Delegate Bates also emphasized that the proposed Compact is an agreement between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico and does not bind any other tribe.

The Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise currently owns and operates two Class III gaming facilities and one Class II gaming facility in the State of New Mexico.

The New Mexico State Legislature is scheduled to convene for its regular session in January.

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